



West Liberty University
Masters in Science
Zoo Science Fellowship Program

STUDENT HANDBOOK

POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

2025-2026

West Liberty University

Department of Biological Sciences

Student Handbook

Opening and General Information

West Liberty University (WLU) and the Faculty and Staff of the Zoo Science and Applied Conservation major (within the Department of Biological Sciences of the College of Sciences) welcome you! We congratulate you on your acceptance into this graduate program and look forward to assisting you in achieving your career goal of becoming a zookeeper, curator, director, conservationist, or working with wildlife, among other career options, working directly with wildlife. The path you have chosen is intense, yet highly rewarding. In addition to guiding you through the academic and internship phases, the major will also facilitate professionalism and empathy, traits that are essential in the arena of animal husbandry and conservation practices.

The WLU Zoo Science and Applied Conservation Graduate Student Handbook provides information about the policies, procedures, and requirements for successful navigation and completion of the requirements of the Master's degree and Graduate Assistantship. The information provided is not all-inclusive. Therefore, in addition to the major-specific policies and procedures covered in this handbook, the West Liberty University MA/MS in Biology Program Handbook also covers additional school-wide policies and procedures.

Questions about policies, requirements, and procedures may be directed to the Director of Zoo Science and Applied Conservation (Dr. Zachary Loughman) for clarification. You are encouraged to refer to the handbook frequently for information. Please retain this handbook for the duration of the program.

****You are required to detach the Statement of Acknowledgement form and the Interview/Photography Release form, sign, date, and return them to the Department of Biological Sciences Administrative Assistant, Ms. Blum, by the end of the first week of the fall semester.**

It is imperative that you take the time to review this handbook, the catalog, and any other resources associated with your program of study to become informed of expectations. WLU makes every attempt to remain flexible; however, rules and penalties will not be waived or exceptions granted just because someone is unaware of specific policies or procedures.

Background and History

West Liberty University is a forward-looking, public university steeped in a rich heritage as West Virginia's oldest institution of higher education. Established as West Liberty Academy in 1837 (26 years before the state was admitted to the Union), it was created to respond to the need for higher educational opportunities west of the Appalachian Ridge. The institution is named for the town in which it is located. West Liberty was so named in the late 18th Century as the westernmost point of the new liberty provided through the Declaration of Independence.

Mission

Fostering students' aspirations through hands-on learning, personalized support, and unique academic programs at both undergraduate and graduate levels.

Nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunity

West Liberty University is an Equal Opportunity-Affirmative Action institution. In compliance with Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, West Virginia Human Rights Act, Title IX (Educational Amendments of 1972), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and other applicable laws and regulations, the institution provides equal opportunity to all prospective and current members of the student body, faculty, and staff based on individual qualifications and merit without regard to race, sex, religion, age, national origin, disability, or veterans status as identified and defined by law. The institution neither affiliates knowingly with, nor grants recognition to, any individual, group, or organization having policies that discriminate based on race, color, age, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, or veteran status as defined by applicable laws and regulations. Inquiries concerning the application of the above statement should be addressed to: Human Resources/Affirmative Action Officer, West Liberty University, 208 University Drive, College Union Box 131, West Liberty, WV 26074; Phone: 304.336.8029.

Campus Security and Emergency Procedures

Campus police officers enforce state, local, and college rules and regulations governing underage drinking, the use of controlled substances, weapons, and all other incidents requiring police assistance. They are also responsible for public safety services, such as crime reports, medical emergencies, fire emergencies, and traffic accidents. Monthly reports are submitted to the West Virginia State Police, consistent with the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) systems.

TopperNet is used to notify the campus community in the event of an emergency.

1. Go to: <https://www.getrave.com/login/westliberty>. Click on “Join Now.”
2. Complete the information on the “Create Account” page, agree to the Terms of Service, and click “Next.”
3. A confirmation screen will appear, explaining that Rave has sent you an email. Go to your email account and click the link.
4. When you click the link, a 4-digit code will be sent to your phone. A screen will open on your computer asking you to type in that code.
5. This will take you to your main account screen. You’re finished!

West Liberty University Policies and Procedures

All policies from the MA/MS in Biology.

Zoo Science Major Full-Time Personnel

Dr. Karen Kettler, Ed.D. - (304) 336-8070

Dean of the College of Sciences

Dr. Zachary Loughman, PhD. - (304) 336-8923

Professor of Biology & Co-Chair of the Department of Biological Sciences

Director of Zoo Science and Applied Conservation

Director of the Appalachian Aquatic Conservation Center

Director of the WLU Herpetarium and Ambassador Animal Collection

Dr. Diana Barber, PhD. - (304) 336-8213

Associate Professor of Biology

Coordinator of Animal Management

Online Graduate Coordinator

Dr. Matthew McKinney, PhD. - (304) 336-1872

Assistant Professor of Biology

Coordinator of Applied Conservation

Mr. Jeremiah Dann, MS. - (304) 336-8083

Instructor of Biology

Coordinator of Aquiculture and Aquarium Sciences

Mrs. Kinsey Skalican Guthrie - (304) 336-8151

Instructor of Biology

Associate Curator of Exotherms and Ambassador Animals

Ms. Lauren Mort - (304) 336-8154

Associate Curator of Exotherms and Ambassador Animals

Ms. Tanya Khan

Associate Curator of the Appalachian Aquatic Conservation Center

Ms. Bree Blum - (304) 336-8149

Administrative Assistant of the Department of Biological Sciences

Oglebay Good Zoo Director - (304) 639-7684

Dr. Joe Greathouse, PhD.

Contract Veterinarian

Dusty Betlem, DVM

WEST LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
ZOOsci
 MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

DR. ZACHARY LOUGHMAN



- Co-Chair of Biological Sciences - Organismal Biology Division
- Director of Zoo Science & Applied Conservation
- Director of the Appalachian Aquatic Conservation Center
- Director of the WLU Herpetarium & Ambassador Animal Collection

ACADEMICS

UNDERGRADUATES



MR. JEREMIAH DANN
 Coordinator of Aquiculture
 and Aquarium Science



MS. BREE BLUM
 Administrative Assistant
 of the Department of
 Biological Sciences

GRADUATES



DR. DIANA BARBER

- Coordinator of
 Animal Management
- Online Graduate
 Coordinator



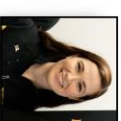
DR. MATTHEW MCKINNEY
 Coordinator of
 Applied Conservation

**HUSBANDRY
 & FACILITY**

**HERPETARIUM &
 AMBASSADOR
 COLLECTION**



MRS. KINSEY GUTHRIE
 Curator of Exotherms and
 Ambassador Animals



MS. LAUREN MORT
 Associate Curator
 of Exotherms and
 Ambassador Animals

**APPALACHIAN
 AQUATIC CONSERVATION
 CENTER**



MS. TANYA KHAN
 Associate Director of the
 Appalachian Aquatic
 Conservation Center

ZOO SCI FELLOWS

ZOO SCI MENTORS

ZOO SCI UNDERGRADUATES

Master's in Science - Zoo Science with Graduate Assistantship

Courses:

- BIO 520 Quantitative Biological Techniques (3h),
- BIO 540 Advanced Conservation Biology (4h),
- BIO 543 Graduate Zoo Herpetology (3h),
- BIO 545 Graduate Zoo Mammalogy (3h),
- BIO 547 Graduate Zoo Ornithology (3h),
- BIO 549 Advanced Zoo Animal Behavior (4h),
- BIO 580 Independent Study (1h),
- BIO 598 Thesis __ (9h),
- Thesis Defense __ (P/F)

MS Graduate Assistants must complete at a minimum an average of 20 hours a week, per semester, of animal husbandry for the WLU animal collection.

Thirty (30) credit hours are required to graduate from West Liberty with an M.S. in Biology. Zoo Science option: of those 30 credits, a maximum of 9 credit hours of thesis may be applied.

- M.S. in Biology students must complete the 19 credit hours of graduate Zoo Science core curriculum courses with no grades lower than a “C” in any course.
- M.S. in Biology students may take up to 9 credit hours of BIO 580 Independent Study per semester; no more than 1 credit hour may be used to complete the 30 credit hour degree.
- Although BIO 598 Thesis credit hours may exceed the 9 required for the M.S. in Biology, only the 9 required hours will count toward the degree.
- All MS candidates must pass an oral thesis defense upon completion of course requirements and thesis; the MS in Biology will only be awarded to those students who successfully complete all requirements, including the oral thesis defense.
- The M.S. in Biology requires a cumulative 3.0 GPA; no more than 6 credit hours of “C” grades may be applied to the total hours for graduation.
- These worksheets are to be used as a guide. Each student is responsible for their curriculum and meeting the requirements for graduation as stipulated in the college catalog.
- Courses may not be offered every semester and/or year; please consult with the Biology advisor for sequencing

Semester 1

BIO 549	4 credit hours	Advanced Zoo Animal Behavior
BIO 520	3 credit hours	Quantitative Biological Techniques

Semester 2

BIO 545	3 credit hours	Graduate Zoo Mammalogy
BIO 547	3 credit hours	Graduate Zoo Ornithology

Semester 3

BIO 543 3 credit hours Graduate Zoo Herpetology

BIO 580 2 credit hours Independent Study

Semester 4

BIO 552 4 credit hours Zoo Conservation

BIO 580 9 credit hours Thesis

MS in Biology Zoo Science total hours = 34 credit hours

If an MS student does not complete their thesis, they can choose to complete the MA program instead.

Master's in Science - Zoo Science without Graduate Assistantship

You will be accepted as an M.S. student if you have a faculty member who agrees to be your advisor. Along with the courses below, an M.S. student will conduct a Graduate Thesis project and complete a written thesis to be defended to the public and their committee.

M.S. Courses:

- BIO 520 Quantitative Biological Techniques (3h),
- BIO 543 Graduate Zoo Herpetology (3h),
- BIO 545 Graduate Zoo Mammalogy (3h),
- BIO 547 Graduate Zoo Ornithology (3h),
- BIO 549 Advanced Zoo Animal Behavior (4h),
- BIO 552 Zoo Conservation (4h),
- BIO 580 Independent Study (1h),
- BIO 598 Thesis __ (9h),
- Thesis Defense __ (P/F)

Possible alternate courses:

- BIO 556* Advanced Parasitology (3h),
- BIO 558* Advanced Animal Nutrition __ (3h)

* These courses may be taken if your advisor approves this alteration or addition to your curriculum. If an M.S. Student chooses not to complete their thesis research, they have the option to instead complete their degree as an M.A. The course curriculum is listed below.

Master's in Arts (M.A.) - Zoo Science

Any accepted graduate student can complete their degree as an M.A. and choose to complete the required 30 credits and courses.

- BIO 520 Quantitative Biological Techniques (3h),
- BIO 543 Graduate Zoo Herpetology (3h),
- BIO 545 Graduate Zoo Mammalogy (3h),
- BIO 547 Graduate Zoo Ornithology (3h),
- BIO 549 Advanced Zoo Animal Behavior (4h),
- BIO 552 Zoo Conservation (4h),
- BIO 554 Graduate Zoo Internship (M.A. / M.S. off campus only, not for GAs) (4h),
- BIO 556* Advanced Parasitology (3h),
- BIO 558* Advanced Animal Nutrition __ (3h),
- Comprehensive Exam, attempt #1 __ (75% minimum score),
- Comprehensive Exam, attempt #2 __ (75% minimum score).

Thirty (30) credit hours of graded graduate-level biology courses are required to graduate from West Liberty with an M.A. in Biology, Zoo Science option.

- M.A. in Biology, Zoo Science option students must complete the 20 credit hours of graduate Zoo Science core curriculum courses with no grades lower than a “C” in any course.
- M.A. in Biology, Zoo Science option students must choose an additional 10 credit hours of graded graduate-level biology courses to complete the required 30 credit hours; recommended courses are shown with an asterisk (*). Courses must be completed with no grade lower than a “C”.
- All additional courses are to be chosen after consultation with the program director and/or graduate advisor.

The M.A. in Biology, Zoo Science option requires a cumulative 3.0 GPA; no more than 6 credit hours of “C” grades may be applied to the total hours for graduation.

- M.A. in Biology, Zoo Science option students may take the comprehensive examination a total of two times to achieve a minimum score of 75%; students must pass the comprehensive examination to earn the M.A. in Biology, Zoo Science option.
- These worksheets are to be used as a guide. Each student is responsible for their curriculum and meeting the requirements for graduation as stipulated in the college catalog.
- Courses may not be offered every semester and/or year; please consult with your Biology advisor for sequencing.

Timeline to Graduation

Master's in Science Zoo Science with Graduate Assistantship - The timeline below is the average student timeline. Some students may have timelines that start earlier than shown below.

Semester 1

- Husbandry training - Learn how to work as a GA in WLU animal lab spaces.
- Completing a successful semester of animal care and working with undergraduate students within the WLU collection.
- Completing approved and necessary graduate courses
- Focus on thesis topics and creating a list of options for your thesis research
- Creating a list of options for your thesis committee (3-4 committee members)
 - The advisor must be a WLU Faculty member
 - Must have one member outside of WLU Biological Sciences - Organismal Division
 - You can have a Co-Advisor for topics with specialties outside of the WLU faculty range.

Semester 2

- Completing approved and necessary graduate courses
- Confirm thesis project
- Complete IACUC - must pass this before you can start research.
- Complete purchasing list if needed - partner with faculty who can make purchases for thesis projects.
- Create your official committee - Must professionally ask all members and get the completed Committee form.
- Possibly start collecting data

Semester 3

- Gathering data
- Writing a Literature review for the thesis
- Completing approved and necessary graduate courses

Semester 4

- Completing approved and necessary graduate courses
- Continuing to gather and finishing up data collection
- Working on stats with a statistician at WLU
- Writing of thesis
- Possible defense & graduation

Semester 5 and future semesters (Optional)- off campus, no longer a WLU GA.

- Writing thesis
- Thesis defense
- Graduation

Expectations of a Thesis Defense

A thesis defense is the presentation of not only your thesis project and its entirety, but also all the knowledge you have mastered over your time in graduate school. This includes a public defense (45 minutes plus questions) and a private defense (1-3+ hours).

Public defense preparation

It is expected that you will create a PowerPoint presentation to serve as your guide for the public defense audience. This PowerPoint will be completed one week (7 days) prior to your public defense and shared with your Graduate Advisor(s) for revisions.

All statistics should be completed with the approval of the statistician you worked with and completed in the PowerPoint.

Your written thesis should be completed and turned in to your thesis advisor(s) at least two weeks before your public defense.

Public defense

In the public defense, you will present to your committee and the public your thesis project as a verbal presentation assisted by a PowerPoint presentation. The verbal portion of a defense is your presentation to your committee and the public of all you have learned and mastered over your time as a graduate student. It is expected that you present using only your PowerPoint, no other heavy notes or documents to read from. Reading through your public thesis defense will automatically be considered a failure, and you will defend your thesis again to your committee at a later date.

Private defense and thesis revisions

In the private defense, you are questioned by your thesis committee over any topic you were taught during your time as a graduate student, as well as any topic presented within your public defense. The private defense is typically 1-3 hours (but can run longer). You are expected to answer questions about any topic contained in your verbal or written thesis and within your academic career at West Liberty University.

After the committee questions, you will discuss revisions to your written thesis. Your committee will have a verbal discussion explaining the highlights and improvements needed for your written thesis, as well as a timeline for having revisions turned in. Once this is complete, an email will be sent outlining the timeline to turn in revisions. Revisions will be emailed to you within the specified timeline, and you will be expected to turn them in on or before your due date. Additional revisions may be requested from your graduate advisor once it is turned in for a preliminary final reading.

Passing your graduate thesis defense

Once you have successfully passed your public defense, private defense, and turned in all revisions asked of you, congratulations! You will have completed your master's degree!

What can cause you to fail your Thesis defense

- Reading your public defense

- Failure to answer thesis and academically appropriate questions in either the public or private defense
- Inappropriate behavior or language during your defense
- Failure to complete revisions and turn in a final draft of your thesis

Expectations of a written thesis

Each thesis will be individualized by the research being completed. Using this as a guideline, in general, a thesis has multiple standard parts. A literature review provides a comprehensive summary of all relevant literature on the thesis research topics and identifies the gaps in the scientific community.

A data chapter that explains the research that was completed and its conclusions. This chapter should contain an introduction, materials and methods, and a conclusion section. Depending on each student's goals, there may be more than one literature review and data chapter completed.

A thesis is completed not by a page number but by a complete mastery of the information needed to thoroughly explain the research and its results to the scientific community. A written thesis may follow the original WLU thesis outline, be formatted as a journal article, a specialized book, or book chapters within the specifications of the research or any other written form approved by the graduate committee.

Tuition, Fees, and Financial Aid

Tuition and Fees

All tuition and fees will be collected through the Business Office located on the third floor of Shaw Hall. Through this system, your payment will be applied directly to your tuition. In addition to tuition, you may have other fees that the Business Office will collect.

The following courses require a Zoo Science fee of \$1,778.00:

- BIO 520 - Quantitative Biological Technique
- BIO 543 - Graduate Zoo Herpetology
- BIO 545 - Graduate Zoo Mammalogy
- BIO 547 - Graduate Zoo Ornithology
- BIO 549 - Advanced Zoo Animal Behavior
- BIO 552 - Zoo Conservation
- BIO 556 - Advanced Parasitology
- BIO 558 - Advanced Animal Nutrition

Financial Aid

Zoo Science students are eligible for financial aid through the WLU Financial Aid office, as long as they are enrolled in a minimum of six (6) credit hours per semester.

Financial Aid packages can be augmented to cover the cost of the Zoo Science course fees. Should you want to cover these fees with your financial aid package, you will need to make arrangements with the Financial Aid office.

See Financial Aid Office under the Current Student section of the WLU Web page:
<http://www.westliberty.edu/financial-aid/>

Zoo Science Graduate Assistantship Schedules and Hours

Students participating in the Zoo Science Graduate Assistantship are required to complete 20 hours a week or an average of 20 hours a week for each semester. This means that you may work more than 20 hours within a week due to time away from campus for research, conferences, or other off-campus needs. Hours will consist of, but are not limited to, animal husbandry, student husbandry training, moving enclosures or other large materials, assisting with educational programs, recruitment events, driving to acquire materials, and other assigned tasks from faculty or staff. Graduate thesis work does not count as GA hours.

Students will be trained by faculty and staff to work with the animal collection. Students are not to work with animals until they have the appropriate training on each rank of animal and have been approved by all appropriate faculty and staff. For the Safety of the collection, students are not to conduct any unapproved movement of animals or larger furniture in lab spaces.

Student Assessments:

Students may have assessments throughout their time as a GA, covering but not limited to:

- Animal husbandry - what animals you can work with.
- Lighting - What lights are used for, and how to use them appropriately.
- Husbandry tools - how to properly use items like snake hooks, medications, computer programs, etc.

University Assessment:

WLU requires each Graduate Assistant to be assessed each semester. This is an overview of the work as a graduate assistant and how the Graduate Assistant is performing in the position, as well as the progression in the program. If a Graduate Assistant is found to perform poorly, they may be asked to leave the Graduate Assistantship and continue as a normal M.S. Student, or they may be asked to leave the program.

Animal Ranks:

Animal rank is based on the WLU collection plan. During the creation of our collection plan, each species was ranked based on its individual care needs and behaviors. Note that individual animals may receive a ranking different from their species' status due to details of their temperament or life history. The ranking of a given species or individual is entirely at the discretion of the Zoo Science faculty and staff. Students must first prove their mastery through assessment of the lower-level ranks before moving on to more challenging species in each taxonomic group.

Animal Collection Rankings:

- **Beginner** – Animals that possess a low likelihood of escape, exhibit low-stress levels around humans, do not require specialized feeding methods, and are less than 1 meter in length.
- **Intermediate** – Animals that may be more easily stressed. Animals that have either a strike history or are from a species known to be strike-prone.
- **Advanced** – Animals that are more than 1 meter in length and are easily stressed, and/or have a higher defensive response history, or are from a species known to be strike-prone.
- **Master** – Any venomous animal, and/or are very easily stressed. Any animal that has a higher strike history requiring medical attention or is from a species that has a higher likelihood of causing potential injury requiring medical attention.

Any issues or questions must be reported to faculty and staff via email, text, or phone.

Dress Code

WLU Zoo Science dress code for working in animal labs requires the following:

- Closed-toed and full-foot covering shoes such as sneakers or boots.
 - No shoes that expose portions of your foot are permitted in labs (ex., Crocs/mules, sandals, ballet flats, etc.)
- Durable pants in khaki, black, grey, navy, or dark green. Shorts with an inseam of at least 6" are allowed, but contact with certain animals will be restricted for safety. Mentors and GAs must have on full-length pants.
 - The following are STRICTLY PROHIBITED: Jeans, leggings, jeggings, stretch pants, and sweatpants of any kind.
- Shirts must cover the whole torso and shoulders.
 - Any WLU shirts and sweatshirts in appropriate colors are permitted. ZooSci shirts are highly preferred.
 - Plain shirts in black, yellow, or grey may be worn as an alternative.
 - No non-WLU logos or graphics are allowed for lab shifts.
 - Mentors and GAs must have ZooSci on the outermost layer of clothing while on duty.

The dress code must be followed at all times when working in the lab spaces. This can be scheduled time or unscheduled opportunities to work in the labs.

Dress code is highly recommended if you are working on thesis research within any Zoo Sci lab spaces. You will be asked to leave the labs if you are not dressed in accordance with the dress code. You may return when you have proper attire.

Inappropriate Attire

Under the dress code policy, the following items are inappropriate to wear while working in the Zoo Science lab spaces:

- Flip-flops or other open-toed shoes
- Crocks, or other open-heeled shoes
- Stilettos, or other high-heeled shoes
- Tank tops, or other sleeveless shirts
- Shirts with inappropriate logos
- Mid-drift tops or low-cut tops
- Shirts made of thin material that offer no protection
- Dresses or skirts
- Shorts with inseams of less than 6"
- Leggings or other thin material pants or shorts

Anyone wearing these items violates the dress code and will be asked to wear lab safety apparel or to leave the lab spaces.

Immunizations/Bloodborne Pathogen Training

The West Liberty University Zoo Science major requires that its students be up to date on the following immunizations and skin tests. Students are expected to have these immunizations by the end of September and updated as needed (see below). Students must provide written proof of immunizations to be included with their student records.

Tuberculosis (TB)

Individuals with a history of positive tests must provide documentation of appropriate screening and treatment. A history of receiving the BCG vaccine is not a contraindication to skin testing. Two-step testing is required. Chest x-ray results (required if PPD test is positive). Annual TB testing is required.

Tetanus or Diphtheria/Pertussis Tetanus series

Tetanus vaccination is necessary every ten years.

Primary series of 4 doses with TDaP or DTP.

Bloodborne Pathogen Training:

All students must go to the following website and complete Bloodborne Pathogen Training:

<https://westliberty.edu/health-and-safety/bloodborne-pathogen-training/>

Students must watch the video and take the exam. Results will automatically be sent to the WLU Health and Safety Specialist.

Reports of Problems/Emergencies

All problems with animals, enclosures, or peers at West Liberty University must be reported to animal keeping staff and faculty immediately. If none/neither of these individuals is unavailable, report to one of the non-husbandry associated Zoo Science staff members.

“Problems” include, but are not limited to: dietary issues (animal refusing to eat, food supplies low), equipment issues (leaking humidifier or refrigerator, heat lamp out, flooding or broken aquarium), or unethical behavior of peers (notice peers not adhering to animal care schedule or arranging for animal encounters for friends).

In the event that a student is bitten or scratched, notify any of the individuals listed above, or, in the event of an emergency, contact Campus Police at 304-336-8021.

For any problems/emergencies occurring at the Good Zoo or another internship location, students must report to the daily supervisor or internship coordinator of the institution.

Professional/Ethical Conduct

Students within the Zoo Science Master's Program are to behave in a professional/ethical manner at

all times while performing animal husbandry, community outreach programming, conservation research, lab or field hours, and internships. Professional behavior includes using appropriate and not foul language, showing up on time for all Zoo Science-related activities, obtaining immunizations by the required date and submitting the proper paperwork in a timely fashion, appropriately representing West Liberty University or Zoo Science while wearing WLU and Zoo Sci apparel on or off campus, using appropriate discretion, reporting all opportunities for improvement to the faculty and staff supervisor. Improper or irresponsible animal care will not be tolerated and could mean dismissal from the GA position.

All animals are to be treated in an ethical fashion with respect. All animal husbandry must be performed on schedule, as a deviation from the schedule could result in an animal's death. Only Zoo Science students, Zoo Science faculty, and staff are allowed entrance into animal enclosures, or conservation/breeding/research laboratories, unless authorized by the appropriate faculty and staff first. Students must not arrange for animal encounters with friends or family unless permission is given for such encounters. Failure to adhere to this rule could result in dismissal from the major.

Social Media Policies/Guidelines

Participation in social media and online activities such as blogging, tweeting, snapping, Instagramming, Facebooking, Wikipedia, or any other form of online publishing is commonplace in modern society. While you may want to blog, tweet, or photograph your experiences as a Zoo Science student, please adhere to the following guidelines:

1. Any "posts" to a social media outlet (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, etc.) must be approved by a Zoo Science faculty or staff member prior to submission. This includes photos taken of Zoo Science animals.
2. Any "posts" or photos related to internship experiences must also be approved by the internship coordinator/administrator of the institution from which the internship is taken.

Disciplinary Action

WLU Zoo Science and Applied Conservation majors are expected to represent the Zoo Science and Oglebay Good Zoo in a professional manner and abide by all established policies and procedures.

Infractions of student policies or performance issues will be dealt with in a fair and appropriate manner.

The standard disciplinary process includes, but is not limited to:

1. Verbal warning and coaching from the immediate staff or faculty supervisor, or upon request the Associate Curator of Exotherms and Ambassador Animals, or Director of Zoo Science and Applied Conservation.
2. Depending on the severity and/or type of infraction, the outcome may include:
 - a. The restrictions on student assignments,
 - b. Restrictions on the types of animals the student can work with, and
 - c. The student will be required to perform additional training.

3. If the problem persists, the student has multiple infractions/performance issues, or severe infractions (specifically infractions that result in documented animal cruelty), the student may be immediately dismissed from the Zoo Science Graduate Assistantship.

This process may be altered depending on the disciplinary issue, severity of the infraction, or other circumstances.

The WLU faculty/staff or the Oglebay staff will determine all disciplinary actions.

Discretion

As a Zoo Science major, you will be privy to certain information that is not to be announced to the public. Please do not discuss with, or within earshot of the public, online, or in email, policies you disagree with, interpersonal relationships with fellow students, or such events as animal escapes, births, deaths, injuries, etc. Such events are announced publicly by the Zoo Science faculty staff as necessary, and your “leak” may be in error or may adversely affect the Zoo Science program.

A student may receive disciplinary action for any of the following reasons:

- Mistreatment of animals or animal cruelty.
- Handling, working, or moving enclosures of animals without prior authorization.
- Disrespectful attitude toward students, professors, or guests of the university.
- Slandorous speech about the major or West Liberty University.
- Bullying or harassing other students, professors, or guests of the university.
- Inappropriate interactions with fellow students, professors, or guests of the university.
- Stealing from the West Liberty students, professors, or guests of the university.
- Possession of unauthorized West Liberty or staff property (including keys).
- Giving your Student ID card to others or failing to report a loss in a timely manner.
- Vandalism.
- Failure to keep student ID swipe card and log-in information confidential.
- Failure to provide emergency contact information.
- Failure to return Zoo Science keys to their appropriate overnight places.
- Taking home the Zoo Sci keys.
- Two unexcused absences.
- Excessive unexcused tardiness - “excessive” is defined as the 4th day of lateness in an academic year. For each additional tardy day, refer to item 2 in the “standard disciplinary process” above.
- Failure to meet the minimum GA hours requirements.
- Entering restricted areas.
- Leaving the assigned area without properly securing all animals.
- Switching assignments or leaving an assigned task without supervisor approval.
- Use of profane language.
- Failure to comply with uniform/appearance policies while at Oglebay Good Zoo, WLU campus, or outreach activities.
- Failure to comply with the social media policy.
- Failure to follow policies outlined in this manual or covered in training classes.
- Failure to follow established education/outreach program procedures.
- Failure to follow the instructions of faculty or staff.
- Use of illegal drugs on WLU or Oglebay Good Zoo property (This includes tobacco and vapes on WLU campus).

- Violation of any state, federal, or local laws.

**The examples of prohibited conduct described above are illustrative of the type of behavior that will not be permitted, but are not intended to be all-inclusive.

Miscellaneous Regulations

Students ***must not*** bring friends or family outside the Zoo Science Major “behind the scenes”. West Liberty guests, including students’ family and friends, are not permitted in restricted areas or areas off-limits to the general public, including animal holding areas.

Students are not permitted to name the animals. Naming the animals can cause confusion in animal records and between students/staff members. Ideas for animal names should be given to Zoo Science faculty and staff members. The Zoo Science room (Arnett 301) animals and education animals may have assigned names, all other animals will have assigned numbers, which is standard practice.

Students are not permitted to train the animals without prior consent from appropriate staff and faculty. Training procedures are very structured and sensitive. An animal’s training can be severely impacted by training from unauthorized persons.

Pets or any animal not affiliated with the WLU animal collection are not permitted in any Zoo Science rooms. This includes Emotional Support animals (ESA) that are permitted into dormitories or other campus housing.

In accordance with federal and state laws, service support animals are permitted as a reasonable accommodation for individuals with disabilities when medically required.

Work Areas

All work areas shall be kept clean and orderly at all times. Students must take the initiative to sweep, pick up garbage, etc., to maintain an excellent appearance of the Zoo Science areas.

Food and beverages should be consumed in designated areas only. Eating and drinking around animals is NOT permitted. Paper cups, soft drink cans, and food are not permitted in other areas without the permission of the area's supervisor.

Students are not permitted to use any equipment unless specifically trained and asked to do so.

Students are not permitted to use any Zoo Sci computers other than the VICTOUCH station unless otherwise trained and told to do so.

Students are not permitted in dangerous animal areas or other areas designated off-limits or areas/animals they are not yet trained for. Students are also not permitted to touch, feed, or handle any animals that are being used for projects. These areas will be covered during a training class and may

be altered by staff as circumstances require.

Students are encouraged to develop positive working relationships with all Zoo Science staff, faculty, and student members. However, the student must be courteous and mindful of the zoo team members' daily responsibilities, duties, and time limitations.

All Zoo Science work areas may be under surveillance.

Emergency Procedures

All injuries to guests, employees, and students should be referred to most immediate faculty and staff members, and the Associate Curator of living collection Exotherms and Ambassador Animals or the Director of Zoo Science and Applied Conservation should be notified. Accident reports must be filled out (by a Zoo Science team member), no matter how small the accident.

It is required that all students have a **current tetanus vaccination**. Any student receiving a bite or puncture wound must report to the faculty and staff.

In the case of serious injury, notify the closest staff or faculty, the Associate Curator of Exotherms and Ambassador Animals, or the Director of Zoo Science and Applied Conservation, and they will decide what procedures need to be taken. If an injured person refuses to fill out an accident report, then contact Zoo Sci faculty and staff so the incident may be recorded. Please do not make any statements regarding cause or fault.

In case of fire, direct all persons to the nearest exits and notify a Zoo Science Team member immediately. If an animal is injured, appears sick, has escaped, etc., notify the on-duty animal care staff and faculty immediately.

Emergency procedures and the student's role in an emergency situation will be covered in detail during student training.

Grievance Policy

Students should consult faculty or staff if they have a problem or suggestion about the program or their duties.

It is very important that the grievances or concerns be addressed immediately. Please talk to an appropriate Zoo Science team member in a timely fashion.

Social media sites are not the appropriate places to air grievances. The use of such sites to address complaints regarding the Zoo Science program or staff can be grounds for dismissal from the program.

Social Media Reminder (see Social Media policy for more information)

West Liberty expects students to exercise personal responsibility whenever they participate in social media (blogs, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, etc.). Students must not discuss matters related to Zoo Science business, students, employees, or guests. Anything that is not public knowledge should not be posted. Publications of photos or videos, including behind-the-scenes areas, are prohibited without prior authorization from appropriate faculty and staff. Photos of other students or staff must not be posted unless you have received permission. Please be respectful of others and their privacy.

Students should be aware that Facebook and other forms of social media are inappropriate places to air grievances. Please refer to the grievance policy for how to deal with problems or complaints.

Students must abide by the WPC Blogging and Social Media Policy – see Appendix A.

Mandatory Meetings

There will be monthly mandatory meetings that all Zoo Science and Applied Conservation majors are required to attend. The times, dates, and locations of these meetings will be announced at the beginning of the semester. Any absences must be requested in writing and approved in advance. If students do not attend these meetings, disciplinary action will be taken at the discretion of the faculty members.

PLEASE NOTE: The policies and procedures stated in this handbook take precedence over West Liberty University policies and procedures as of August 25, 2025, and are subject to change. If there are changes that are effective for 2025-2026, insofar as possible, these will be announced by email. Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information in this publication. Students are advised, however, that such information is subject to change without notice. Therefore, students should always consult with the Biology Program faculty and administration for current information.

Appendix A

West Liberty University Interview/Photography Release

I give my consent to be filmed, taped, or interviewed for the following purposes:

I understand and agree that my image or voice may be used in connection with any and all West Liberty University promotional materials or forms of media. Use could include, but is not limited to, promotional DVDs, broadcast commercials, brochures, postcards, and all forms of advertising. I also understand that any of this media may be posted on the World Wide Web/Internet, and I give permission for the media to be used and distributed on the World Wide Web/Internet.

I expressly release West Liberty University and its respective agents, officers, and employees from any privacy, defamation, or other claims that I may have against it arising out of the publication, distribution, or other use of interviews, videotapes (including audio), or photographs as described above.

I understand the terms of this form, and I give my consent as described above.

Street Address: _____

City/State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Statement of Acknowledgement

I have received a copy of the *Graduate Student Zoo Science Student Handbook-Policies and Guidelines, 2025-2026*. I agree to read and follow the policies outlined.

Name(print): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

PRIMARY EMERGENCY CONTACT FORM

(Please Print)

Name: _____

Address: _____

Relationship: _____

Home Phone: _____ Alternate Phone: _____

WLU Zoo Science Fellow Key Agreement

Each Zoo Science fellow (referred to as a GA for this document) is assigned a set of keys at the beginning of their graduate assistantship. Each set of keys has an identifying number tag. GAs may use their assigned keyset only for work and for academic use, requiring them to work in the animal

rooms. Keys are to remain secured in the GA lockbox located outside of the commissary when not in use and must be returned to the lockbox prior to clocking out.

The lockbox code will be changed periodically by management. That code will be shared with GAs in a timely manner. No GA is permitted to share that code with anyone who does not also have an assigned keyset held in the lockbox.

If any key becomes damaged or lost, the GA is to notify their supervisor immediately. Lost keys are a liability and must be searched for until located. GAs must notify the supervisor as soon as the key is located. Damaged keys will be replaced at management's discretion based on need, ability to replace, and responsible usage.

I, Zoo Science fellow, _____ am responsible for the appropriate usage and storage of Zoo Science Keyset # _____.

I understand that not following the key agreement may result in disciplinary action.

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

WLU Zoo Science Graduate Assistant Dress Code

WLU Zoo Science dress code for working in animal spaces requires the following:

- Closed-toed and full-foot covering shoes such as sneakers or boots. No shoes that expose portions of your foot are permitted in labs (ex., Crocs/mules, sandals, ballet flats, etc.)
- Durable pants in khaki, black, grey, navy, or dark green. Shorts with an inseam of at least 6" are allowed, but contact with certain animals will be restricted for safety. Mentors and GAs must have on long pants.
 - STRICTLY PROHIBITED are Jeans, leggings, jeggings, stretch pants, and sweatpants of any kind
- Shirts must cover the full torso and shoulders.
- Any WLU shirts and sweatshirts in appropriate colors are permitted. ZooSci shirts are highly preferred.
- Plain shirts in black, yellow, or grey may be worn as an alternative.
- No non-WLU logos or graphics are allowed for lab shifts.
- Mentors and GAs must have ZooSci on the outermost layer of clothing while on duty.

**You will be asked to leave the labs if you are not dressed in accordance with the dress code.

**You may return when you have proper attire.

I, _____ (Print name) understand and agree to abide by the ZooSci dress code.

Signature: _____

Date: _____